

Personality, Policies, and Partisanship: The Effect of Big Five Personality Traits on State-level Politics
Mary Ankenbruck; Aaron Dusso¹

¹Department of Political Science, IU School of Liberal Arts

Personality has always been viewed as an individual metric; however, ground-breaking research has changed that mentality. When examined in the aggregate, the personality scores of inhabitants create geographical psychological profiles that impact a multitude of political, economic, social, and health factors. These findings invite questions about what other regional differences are affected by the personalities of the inhabitants of the region, especially in the area of policy. This is especially interesting as other research has shown that on the individual level there are statistically significant correlations between personality traits and beliefs and behaviors that influence policy outcomes, such as religiosity and prejudice. Thus, in this paper we explore if these correlations extend to the state level. We do so by testing newly available state-wide Big Five personality t-scores for the 48 contiguous US states alongside state by state analysis of policy areas including marriage equality, abortion rights, death penalty, and gun rights. Preliminary results suggest that, when controlling for other factors such as demographics and partisanship, the personality profile of a state does indeed have an effect on the policies enacted within that state's borders. The completion of this project will add to the growing body of political psychology research and may address important issues such as the polarization of politics and the overall importance of personality as both an individual and societal level metric.

Mentor: Aaron Dusso, Department of Political Science, IU School of Liberal Arts, IUPUI